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The Corona Improvement (J-3)
Program Development History''
COR-6148/67 27 Oct 67, TS.

The CORONA Improvement Program, for which OSP was assigned responsibility in the _____ to the August 1965 NRO Agreement, had been discussed early in 1965 between Mr. Crowley and Dr. Fubini. Studies were made of the weaknesses of the current "J" system and several improved designs were offered, all incorporating improved panoramic and stellar index camera systems and improved command systems, and each varying in specifications for the launch vehicle, film load, orbital lifetime and recovery vehicle configuration. saving plan using the Atlas-Agena launch vehicle, a 30-day orbital mission with increased film, and a resulting, reduced number of launches. The DNRO, however, decided to stick

An eight month delay ensued following this decision before go-ahead and financial support were given by the DNRO. Finally when the April 1966 CORONA Management Directivex was promulgated, the go-ahead was given, but the expected first J-3 launch had then slipped from Jan. 1967 to July 1967. The J-3 qualification program went smoothly

with the Douglas Thor, with a modest upgrading to allow

for increased payload weight for a new Constant Rotator

camera and an improved stellar index camera.

NRO review(s) completed.

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through to July 1967 when first launch was anticipated. thermal altitude However in final testing both the panoramic and stellar index cameras had problems duxingxthexmaxxaitxitude and therefore the first J-3 Constant Rotator was delayed another wntil-7-September-1967. six weeks. The first J-3 launch (Msn1101) took place on 15 September 1967, and recovery of both buckets was completed on 28 September. The J-3 was considered an outstanding success from a technical standpoint since all design goals were achieved. Problems experienced on Msn 1101 were of a minor nature, correctable before the next CR flight without any major rework, and the performance was judged to be the best ever from a CORONA system.